

Sutton on the Forest Primary School

POLICY DOCUMENT

To create a school where we all:
 Go further than we thought!
 run faster than we hoped!
 reach higher than we dreamed!
 to become the people God meant us to be!!!!

POLICY TITLE	FOREST SCHOOL
RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE	Curriculum and Standards
RATIONALE	<p>Sutton on the Forest Primary School aims to use the natural outdoor woodland area around our school to offer children an insight into the Forest School ethos. Every child should have regular, long-term access to a woodland or natural environment which can provide them with inspirational and challenging outdoor learning opportunities. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves. Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality and develops their skills for lifelong learning. It can cover all six areas of learning, including the emotional and spiritual aspects of learning where self esteem and self confidence can grow and positive relationships with peers can be formed. Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round. It develops peer learning with the adults providing support and enabling activities to take place. The child's interest will be at the heart of any activity.</p>
AIMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide an opportunity for individuals to develop, to learn and to enjoy themselves. • To provide a safe and non-threatening environment in which children can take risks, make choices and initiate their own learning. • To help children understand, appreciate and care for the natural environment. • To provide ways of developing practical life skills in an outdoor environment. • To develop self-esteem, confidence and a positive disposition to learning through the completion of small, achievable tasks. • To meet the needs of children with all learning styles • To develop social and team working skills • To enable children to be independent, self-motivated and considerate. • To be true to the forest school ethos and approach • To develop a secure, happy and welcoming environment. • To provide stimulation and varied learning activities appropriate to the child's needs and stages of development. • To help each child build self-esteem, confidence, independence and self-control and interpersonal skills.

OBJECTIVES

The Forest School ethos has six principles, which were agreed by the UK Forest School community in 2011.

The six guiding principles of Forest School are given below. Criteria for good practice relating to each are listed directly underneath.

Principles and criteria for good practice

Principle 1: Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

- Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least four times each term.
- A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
- The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.

Principle 2: Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

- Whilst woodland is the ideal environment for Forest School, many other sites, some with only a few trees, are able to support good Forest School practice.
- The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
- A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/ manager, the forest school practitioner and the learners.
- Forest School aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
- Forest School uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners

- Where appropriate, the Forest School teacher will aim to link experiences at Forest School to home, work and /or school education
- Forest School programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.

Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

- Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
- Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners, and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment. **For North Yorkshire you must have attended fire and sharp tools training.**
- Any Forest School experience follows a Risk-Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

5. Forest School is overseen by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

- Forest School is led or overseen by a qualified Forest School practitioner, who are required to hold at a minimum the North Yorkshire qualification in Forest Schools Initiative.
- There is a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners.
- Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.
- Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification, which includes paediatric (if appropriate) and outdoor elements.
- Forest School is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running Forest School and which establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
- The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too.

6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning

- A learner-centred pedagogical approach is employed by Forest School that is responsive to the needs and interests of learners.
- The Practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.
- Play and choice are an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at Forest School.
- Forest School provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.
- Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.

	<p>• Practitioner observation is an important element of Forest School pedagogy. Observations feed into 'scaffolding' and tailoring experiences to learning and development at Forest School.</p>
RELATED POLICIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment Policy • Teaching and Learning Policy • Equal Opportunities Policy

APPROVED (DATE)	NEXT REVIEW DATE
March 2016	March 2018